

DEMOCRACY IN JAPAN

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INTRODUCTION

FIVE years ago, in the spring of 1925, the Japanese Diet passed a bill removing the last property qualification upon universal manhood suffrage for members of the House of Representatives. This measure increased the Japanese electorate from 3,341,000 to 12,534,360, and placed it upon as broad a basis as any in the West before the principle of woman suffrage was adopted. Back of the act was the long gradual evolution of the Japanese political system that had been in process since the Restoration of 1867. During most of this period Japan was governed neither by the Emperor nor the people, but by an oligarchy of bureaucratic statesmen who had engineered the Restoration. In its large outlines the movement toward popular participation in the government may be summarized in terms of the three reigning eras of the latest Japanese Emperors.

Under Emperor Meiji (1868-1912) control rested in the hands of the clan oligarchy, chiefly of Choshu and Satsuma, reenforced by a rigid administrative bureaucracy. Under Emperor Taisho (1912-1926) the party groups in the House of Representatives, still chosen by a limited electorate, increasingly threatened the supremacy of the clan bureaucracy in the administration of the government. The present Showa era, inaugurated by Emperor Hirohito on Christmas Day 1926, was from the beginning faced by the untried political experiment of a general election under universal manhood suffrage. The two general elections held on this basis in 1928 and 1930 have furnished data sufficient to indicate the new course of development on which the Japanese political system has been launched.

THE PLACE OF THE JAPANESE EMPEROR

The ceremonial enthronement of Emperor Hirohito that took place in 1928 reveals, as does nothing else, the unique position held by the Emperor in the life and thought of the Japanese nation. The Japanese conceive of their monarchy even more as a spiritual than as a political institution. It is this conception that distinguishes the Japanese monarchy from the European monarchies, which on the political side it resembles. The ultimate bases of this spiritual conception of the Japanese monarchy are the national cult of ancestor worship and a wide-spread belief in certain historical articles of what may be termed the monarchical creed of Japan. According to these articles, the dynastic succession in Japan has been unbroken from the accession of Jimmu Tenno nearly twenty-six centuries ago,¹ the present Emperor Hirohito being reckoned as the 124th of the

line. The forebears of Jimmu Tenno are traced back to the Sun Goddess (Amaterasu Omikami), whose grandson was commissioned by the gods to rule Japan.²

Upon this foundation the Japanese government has for two generations carried out a nationalistic program in the public schools designed to foster sentiments of loyalty and patriotism to the Empire. In this program central importance is given to the teachings that the Sun Goddess is the distant ancestress of the reigning Emperor; that in a remote period of Japanese history she appeared in human society as a person of

1. Modern scholarship places Jimmu Tenno's accession at 60 B.C. instead of 660 B.C., the date traditionally accepted, which still invests the Japanese monarchy with an historical continuity of twenty centuries.

2. To this grandson of the Goddess, as a sign of sovereignty, was given a chaplet of jewels, a sword and a mirror, which are still the sacred insignia of the Imperial House, so prominent in all State ceremonies of present-day Japan. The mirror, in particular, has descended directly from the Sun Goddess, who declared that it represents her soul and is to be worshipped as herself. This most sacred of the three insignia is not seen now even by the Emperor. It rests within the innermost shrine at Ise, the material focal point of all that is spiritually the foundation of Japan. A replica of it is placed in the Kashiko-dokoro (The Place of Awe), the Imperial Sanctuary housed in the palace at Tokyo. Within this Ancestral Shrine dwell the deified spirits of the long line of Japanese Emperors—"unbroken for ages eternal."

unusually lofty character who conferred great blessings on the people; that the beginning of the Japanese State, founded eternally on the principle of Imperial sovereignty, is to be carried back to her express command; that her shrine at Ise should be an object of special reverence, and that pilgrimages thereto should be encouraged; that reverence for the shrine should include the elements of worship and prayer, especially prayer for the prosperity of the Imperial Family; that this worship should find its great example in that which is offered to the Sun Goddess by the Royal Court itself; and that the spirit of loyalty and patriotism should be nourished by the observation of the festival days of the Shinto religion.³

EMPEROR HIROHITO'S ENTHRONEMENT

It is in the enthronement of an Emperor that these spiritual bases of the Japanese monarchy are most vividly and concretely manifested.⁴ The thirty or more ceremonies enthroning the present Emperor Hirohito occupied nearly the whole of 1928. The preliminary ceremony of accession had occurred immediately upon the death of Emperor Taisho on December 25, 1926. Well over a year later, on January 17, 1928, following the customary period of mourning, Emperor Hirohito enacted the first of the enthronement ceremonies before the Imperial Sanctuary, informing the spirits of his ancestors of the date set for the coronation. The climax was reached in two ceremonies performed at Kyoto in November 1928. The first of these was the formal enthronement on November 10 in the presence of high court dignitaries and foreign envoys. Then, on the night of November 14, in the peculiarly sacred rite of the Daijo-sai, or Thanksgiving, the Emperor as High Priest of the Japanese nation offered the first fruits of the year to the Sun Goddess, and himself partook of the offerings. Two days later the imposing State Banquet, to which over 2,500 prominent persons were invited, was held at Kyoto. A round of pilgrimages to the national shrines, informing the Imperial ancestors of the completion of the enthronement, brought the ceremonies to a close.

3. Cf. D. C. Holtom, *The Political Philosophy of Modern Shinto*, p. 235.

4. Cf. issues of *The Trans-Pacific* for November 1928.

5. *Ibid.*; cf. also G. C. Allen, *Modern Japan and its Problems*, Chapters II and III; and N. Kitazawa, *The Government of Japan*, p. 7-8.

THE EMPEROR AND SHINTOISM⁵

The roots of Shinto, the State religion of Japan, are to be found in an immemorial ancestor worship. This universal practice relates the spiritual concept of the monarchy to the everyday life and thought of the Japanese people. Ancestor worship in Japan is a living institution rooted in the mental habits and social groupings of the people. It is common to the whole nation without distinction of creed. It also gives rise to the family system by which the individual members of Japanese society are bound into a single organic whole. In this system every Japanese family considers itself an off-shoot, or branch family, in direct line of descent from the ancestors of the Emperor himself. The family patriarchs officiate in acts of worship to their ancestral spirits; and the Emperor, the father of his people and the head of the national family, worships before the altars of the Imperial ancestors in the name of the nation.

Although these underlying spiritual elements have been inherent in the Japanese monarchy from the earliest times, it was not until the early years of the Meiji era that Shintoism was given the unified nationalistic form here outlined. The leaders of that period, by a piece of brilliant statecraft, so reconstructed the Shinto religion as to take the ancient mythology of the race into the service of the State and use it as a vehicle of national sentiment in the manner related above. The policy demonstrated the common origin of their race to the Japanese people, and directed their vague religious sentiments toward nation-worship. The local and family deities became part of that vast concourse of gods, of whom the chief was the Sun Goddess, the Ancestress of the Imperial Family. As the earthly representative of the gods and as himself one of their number, the Emperor became the personification of Japan and the focus of national patriotism. Even educated Japanese, who do not regard him with superstitious awe or believe the stories of his divine origin, are still firm in their idealization of his office, and intensely proud of the fact that their country has the unique institution of an Imperial House based on one unbroken line of descent for two thousand years.

THE POLITICAL SYSTEM OF JAPAN

The Constitution granted by the Emperor in 1889 represented a compromise between the old monarchical tradition and modern constitutional principles. The real administrative control, however, was left in the hands of the clan leaders, where it had rested for centuries. Despite the extraordinarily wide powers nominally vested by the Constitution in the Emperor, his actual place in the new political order was accurately expressed by the aphorism that he "reigns but does not rule." It is very doubtful whether the framers of the Constitution, especially the all-powerful Prince Ito, ever had in mind the progressive democratization of the Japanese political system that has actually taken place. Until very recently the system has been administered as its founders seem to have intended—namely, by a relatively small oligarchy of bureaucratic statesmen. But the powerful leaders of the Meiji era have died, and few have risen to take their places. The feudal spirit of old Japan that trained the people in obedience has been changed by the gradual modernization of the nation. More especially, the rise to influence of the new industrial interests has accelerated democratization of the political system by throwing increased power into the hands of the House of Representatives and the political parties there represented.

FORMATIVE YEARS

The period between the Restoration of 1867 and the promulgation of the Constitution in 1889 comprises the formative years in Japan's modern political development. The crux of the political outcome of the Restoration lay in the relationship the Emperor's powers would bear to those of the clan leaders. In 1867 Emperor Meiji was a youth of fifteen years, and the government set up in his name was controlled by the leaders of the four southwestern clans that had carried through the revolt. These clan leaders were divided into two camps. The moderates were willing to proceed with the abolition of the feudal system and the establishment of a unified monarchy, but they were determined that this new régime should be under their control. The radicals attempted to avert this result by a careful

training of Emperor Meiji in the hope that he might himself be enabled to assert his authority. This radical group also succeeded in placing in the Emperor's Charter Oath of 1868 an article which read: "Deliberative assemblies shall be established and all measures of government decided in accordance with public opinion." The people had of course taken no part in the Restoration, and the manifest purpose of the framers of this article was that the feudal nobility as a whole should be represented in an assembly that would prevent monopolization of the governing power by one or two clans. A deliberative assembly of this nature was actually set up, but it was allowed no real power and was permanently dissolved after two sessions. The moderate Choshu and Satsuma clansmen steadily concentrated the governing power in their own hands. The radicals now turned to the Charter Oath, enlarging the scope of its interpretation through their increasing knowledge of Western democratic institutions, and began to advocate popular participation in the government. Itagaki, an influential radical, left the government in 1872 and two years later organized an association for the study of political science, which became the first political party of Japan. This organization led in the growing agitation for a popular representative assembly. Okuma, another influential leader, followed Itagaki in 1881 by resigning from the government and organizing a second party in support of representative government. In the same year the movement was so far successful that an Imperial rescript was issued promising the establishment of a national popular assembly by 1890.

The framing of the Constitution was largely entrusted to Prince Ito, who went abroad in 1882 to study Western constitutional systems. He took as his chief model the Prussian Constitution, in which he found the best solution for the problem of conserving the powers of the Emperor and the ruling oligarchy while allowing for a representative assembly. The work throughout was kept in the hands of the leaders in the governing oligarchy, although the Emperor was consulted on various points. No consultation was taken with the party leaders

Itagaki and Okuma in framing the instrument, and widespread dissatisfaction was expressed at the strict secrecy maintained, from which it was augured that a conservative document designed to perpetuate the supremacy of the oligarchy was being prepared. The Constitution was promulgated as a grant of the Emperor on February 11, 1889. The first election for the lower house of the Diet was held in July 1890, and the first session was convened in November of the same year.

THE CONSTITUTION

The essential aspect of the Constitution was its tacit ratification of the control of the Japanese government by the ruling oligarchy. The Emperor became the supreme source of political authority, the exercise of which was left in the hands of the Choshu and Satsuma clansmen. Genuine representative government, for which the reformers had been working, was nullified by the denial of Cabinet responsibility to the Diet. For nearly a generation the party groups in the House of Representatives were condemned to a futile if annoying opposition. They could obstruct but not control. The tendency of late years toward Cabinet responsibility to the major party in the lower house must be considered an outcome not contemplated by the framers of the Constitution and not justified by its provisions.

The younger Sat-Cho leaders came in time to be known as the Elder Statesmen (*Genro*).⁶ They had succeeded the group who led the nation through the difficult transition years of the early Restoration, and they had drafted the Constitution. It was but natural that this instrument should be designed to perpetuate their rule, even while not expressly mentioning them. For a generation after the Constitution came into effect in 1890, they administered its operation. They controlled the government by assuming the right to name the Prime Minister. Their advice weighed heaviest on all great questions of domestic and foreign

policy. In times of crisis the nation looked to them for guidance. Their extra-constitutional status was in itself their greatest source of power, since their nominal responsibility to the Emperor was left undefined. Their ability and statesmanship is testified by Japan's present position, for which they are primarily responsible.

The rule of the Elder Statesmen was greatly aided by certain provisions in the Constitution, by a number of supplementary Imperial ordinances, and by the growth of unwritten customs. In the first place, although the Diet must be convoked once a year, its session is limited to three months. The Emperor is besides vested with the power to dissolve the House of Representatives, which causes a prorogation of the House of Peers.⁷ Secondly, the Cabinet, which is the real administrative organ of the government, is formed by the Prime Minister, who may select his colleagues without regard to party. The Cabinet as a collective body is not expressly mentioned in the Constitution, but the individual Ministers are made responsible to the Emperor. Therefore, an adverse vote in the lower house need not lead to the resignation of the government.⁸ Thirdly, the supreme military command is exercised by the chiefs of the General Staffs of the army and navy. They are responsible only to the Emperor, and have the right of private audience upon all matters of national defense. The Ministers of War and Marine must also be senior officers in the defense forces. These privileges have led the General Staff to interfere with the Cabinet's administrative power over the armed forces, causing prolonged conflict between the civil and military branches of the government.⁹ Finally, the budget power of the House of

7. In practice this power is exercised by the Prime Minister, who secures from the Emperor the order of dissolution. By their control of the Prime Minister, the Elder Statesmen could thus dissolve a refractory lower house.

8. The Elder Statesmen formed the government by choosing the Prime Minister, and could then disregard the lower house. The causes resulting in a change of government in Japan have always been complex. Intrigues among the Elder Statesmen were often responsible in the early years. Vigorous public disapprobation expressed through riots or in the newspapers sometimes led to the fall of a government. Increasingly, however, lack of support in the lower house came to be the dominating cause.

9. The Choshu clan has supplied the high army officers, and the Satsuma clan the high naval officers. The Elder Statesmen have thus been enabled to exert a paramount influence over the naval and military affairs of the empire. There is also a political aspect. Cabinets have often been forced out of office simply because the army or navy Ministers resigned, and no other high officers could be found to assume their portfolios. The mere threat of resignation by these Ministers is a powerful coercive force.

6. Cf. U. Iwasaki, *The Working Forces in Japanese Politics*, Chapter III. The title most properly belongs to five knights (*samurai*) of the Choshu and Satsuma clans, and was first applied to them in 1900. They were Prince Yamagata, Prince Ito, Marquis Inouye, Prince Oyama, and Marquis Matsukata. The first three were of Choshu; the two latter of Satsuma. Prince Yamagata organized the new Japanese army on Western lines, based on universal military service. Prince Ito was an intellectual and a thorough student of Western methods. He organized the civil administration of the new Japan.

Representatives is limited. The Cabinet draws up the annual budget and then submits it to the lower house, which can reject or reduce (but not increase) it. Moreover, the upper house exercises an equal power of amendment. And rejection of the budget need not necessarily be taken as a vote of non-confidence, since the government is at liberty to carry out the budget of the previous year.

The Constitution also entrenched the bureaucratic supporters of the Elder Statesmen's régime in the House of Peers and in the Privy Council.

The House of Peers¹⁰ is constituted of princes of the blood, certain members of the titled orders, members nominated by the Emperor for meritorious service, and a few representatives of the highest taxpayers. The princes of the blood do not utilize their right to sit as Peers and the titled members show little ability, so that the real leaders of the house are the third group, appointed for "national service." In principle the powers of the two houses are equal, but the upper house is really in a much stronger position than the lower for several reasons. It has equal authority in legislative matters, it is not subject to dissolution, and its organization can be changed only by an Imperial ordinance, to which it must consent. While governments were formed by the Elder Statesmen, the cooperation maintained between the Cabinet and the House of Peers largely subordinated the lower house.

The Privy Council¹¹ is distinct from the Cabinet, although the Ministers have seats on it *ex-officio*. It is not responsible to the Diet. Its twenty-four members are nominated by the Emperor with the advice of the Prime Minister, and include distinguished administrators, diplomats, judges, educators, and generals or admirals, who have retired. Party politicians are in practice excluded from this body. Its function is merely consultative, but in practice it amends measures laid before it, the most important of which include the interpretation of certain phases of the Constitution, and the ratification of treaties and Imperial ordinances. The Privy Council has often exercised authority equal

to that of the Cabinet by delaying or vetoing measures submitted to it.

When all is said, the political status made effective by the Constitution was a significant change over that of the previous era. Party leaders gained a forum in the House of Representatives from which they could address the nation in legal criticism of the Sat-Cho oligarchy. They could obstruct the Cabinets set up by the Elder Statesmen, and press every chance offered for making the Cabinet responsible to the lower house. For this struggle the Constitution placed several weapons in their hands. The right of the lower house to amend or reject the budget was the chief of these, and became increasingly powerful. In addition, the Constitution left a number of important subjects open to revision by legislative enactment. Among others these included the election law for members of the lower house, the modification of taxes, and the organization of the judiciary. The parties in the lower house were therefore able to direct their efforts toward liberalizing the provisions with regard to these matters.

THE RISE OF PARTY INFLUENCE¹²

When the political struggle was renewed on a constitutional basis in 1890, the military oligarchy of the early Restoration days had been transformed into a Sat-Cho bureaucracy. High government positions were monopolized by the Elder Statesmen. A new centralized educational system skimmed off the cream of the country's talent, and drafted it into the subordinate government positions. A civil service system was in operation which effectively trained its personnel in loyalty to the ruling oligarchy.

The struggle of the parties to assert their supremacy over the bureaucracy was most clean-cut in the years from 1890 to 1894. Cabinets headed by the Elder Statesmen in person were consistently attacked by the parties in the lower house, with opposition centring chiefly on the budgets. When bribery of the members of the House of Representatives proved unavailing, the government resorted to political coercion in the form of dissolution. Even by intimidating the electorate through their control of the

10. Cf. Iwasaki, cited, Chapter IV; also Kitazawa, cited, Chapter VI.

11. Cf. Iwasaki, cited, p. 33; also Kitazawa, cited, p. 59-63.

12. Cf. Iwasaki, cited, p. 90-97; also Kitazawa, cited, Chapter XI.

police, the bureaucrats were unable to secure the election of a complaisant lower house. A truce to this political struggle was called during the Sino-Japanese war of 1894-1895. Then, in 1898, Itagaki and Okuma joined forces, and were suddenly called upon by the Elder Statesmen to form a government. They were caught unprepared, however, and internal dissensions quickly forced the resignation of this first party Cabinet. Its failure partially discredited the movement for a representative government, but its formation was an index of the growth of party influence.¹³

Thereafter the lines of the struggle between the parties and the bureaucracy became more devious. The Elder Statesmen compromised by organizing parties for their own support in the lower house, and the party men became more concerned over lining their pockets than over carrying on the contest for representative government. Alliances based on the division of spoils were formed between the parties and the bureaucrats. From 1898 to 1914 eight successive bureaucratic Ministries held sway. The Elder Statesmen ostensibly withdrew from power after 1900, but from behind the scenes they controlled the governments formed by their protégés.¹⁴ Marquis Okuma emerged from his long retirement to head a quasi-party Cabinet from 1914 to 1916, but it was succeeded by a strictly bureaucratic Ministry under Count Terauchi that ruled to the close of the war.

The balance swung more decidedly in favor of party control of the government after 1918. In that year, Mr. Hara, an able politician and a commoner, this latter an unheard-of thing, formed a bona fide party government¹⁵ that lasted until 1922. Thereafter several bureaucratic Ministries followed in quick succession, being no longer able to hold their ground. The year 1924 saw the formation of the last non-party Cabinet, the day for which now seems definitely to have passed. A Cabinet formed by

the Kenseikai (later the Minseito) party under the Premiership first of Count Kato and then of Mr. Wakatsuki governed from 1925 to 1927.

DECLINE OF THE BUREAUCRACY

Evidently basic changes must have occurred to enable the parties to press the clan bureaucracy so hard.¹⁶ Various causes had contributed to the bureaucrats' decline, which was an obvious fact by 1926. Chief among these causes were the dying-off of the old clan leaders, the growth of industrialism, the piercing of the clans' constitutional defenses, the increase in the electorate, and the modernizing of the spirit of the nation.

By 1926 practically all of the older bureaucratic clansmen had died, leaving few heirs to carry on their work along the original lines. The sole surviving Elder Statesman, Prince Saionji, was very aged. Younger leaders from the Choshu and Satsuma clans were few, and had perforce identified themselves with the parties. The most promising of these was the Choshu clansman, Baron Tanaka, who had become president of the Seiyukai party. Of the Satsuma clan, the most successful leaders were Count Makino and Mr. Tokonami. The former, however, occupied the court post of Lord Keeper of the Privy Seal, which disqualified him from engaging in politics. Mr. Tokonami was the leader of a third party bloc, the Seiyuhonto, which held the balance of power in the lower house.

Long before 1926 the financial and industrial interests of Japan had practically identified themselves with the parties. The frequent dissolutions of the lower house were costly proceedings for the party men, especially since the electorate long remained so small that enough votes could be purchased to decide the result. The parties therefore required money from the capitalists to secure their election, and the elected representatives eked out their small pay and met obligations contracted at election time by making lucrative business connections. The tendency for party men to become railway directors and heads of steamship companies became more pronounced as the government subsidization of industry increased.

13. Okuma went into a retirement that lasted fifteen years, and Itagaki withdrew from politics altogether. In 1900 Prince Ito formed the Seiyukai party from the ranks of Itagaki's supporters.

14. Prince Ito chose Prince Saionji as his protégé; and Prince Yamagata chose Prince Katsura. Prince Saionji took over the leadership of the Seiyukai party, and a long truce ensued between the parties and the bureaucrats. Under a recognized agreement, Prince Saionji alternated with Prince Katsura in the Premiership from 1901 to 1913.

15. He placated Prince Yamagata by appointing as Minister of War General Baron Tanaka, the latest protégé of the militaristic Elder Statesman.

16. Cf. Iwasaki, cited, p. 82-85.

The inevitable outcome of this *mésalliance* was the sapping of the autocratic powers formerly exercised by high members of the Choshu and Satsuma clans.

The constitutional defenses of the clan oligarchy were also crumbling before the onslaught of the parties in 1926. The institution of the Elder Statesmen seems likely to end with the passing of Prince Saionji. He is still consulted on the choice of a Prime Minister and on current problems, but the predominant influence previously exerted by his group has largely disappeared. The important advisory functions formerly exercised by the Elder Statesmen have been largely assumed by the Privy Council, but the increased power wielded by the Cabinet as it has become responsible to the Diet puts a curb on the lengths to which the Privy Council may go. The House of Peers has also undergone a change by the invasion of party supporters, chiefly in the group of Imperial nominees for meritorious service. Recent party Premiers have naturally nominated new peers from among their own ranks. The possibility that this group might sometime control the House of Peers was made real by the reform of 1925 that abolished the provision that the number of non-titled members should not exceed the aggregate strength of the titled members. The political influence exercised by the Sat-Cho oligarchy through the army and navy Ministers has been slightly curtailed by a measure extending the privilege of Cabinet positions to reserve officers as well as those in active service. While the Sat-Cho domination of the defense forces is exerting a lessening influence on the government, it is the third of the remaining bureaucratic fortresses. Finally, the parties have secured a partial liberalization of the civil service regulations and are seeping into the administrative ranks of the bureaucracy in increasing measure. A reverse process is also taking place, whereby men who have worked up through the lower administrative ranks only to find further advance blocked by the clansmen are constrained to offer their services to the parties in order to achieve higher office.

The very general popular disapproval of "clan government" has become increasingly effective with the steady enlargement of the

electorate. The members of the first House of Representatives elected in 1890 were chosen by approximately 500,000 voters. Three successive modifications of the election law, ending with the passage of the bill for universal manhood suffrage in 1925, have since increased the electorate to 12,534,360; and a movement for the enfranchisement of Japanese women is now under way.¹⁷

Powerful forces have gradually modernized the spirit of the Japanese nation. Among these the influences set in motion by industrialism and the World War are of first importance. Universal compulsory education has practically abolished illiteracy; and newspapers like the *Asahi* and the *Mainichi* now boast daily circulations of over a million copies. The student mind has developed a critical and questioning spirit; and the chosen professions have become business and engineering instead of army and law. It is not surprising that in a nation whose spirit has thus changed a military bureaucracy should give way to a system of party government based upon economic power.

DEMOCRACY AND THE PARTIES

The development of a system of responsible parliamentary government and especially the increase in the electorate are witnesses to the growth of democracy in Japan. But although the political parties had come to exercise a preponderant share in the control of the civil government by the end of the Taisho era in 1926, a number of undemocratic features still clustered about the political system that had been developed.¹⁸

Principles and policies were not binding forces upon the groups that made up the parties. This led directly to the curious instability and sudden shifts of party allegiance that have been characteristic of politics in Japan. Japanese political parties were organized by dominant personalities, who exercised an autocratic control over their followers and were expected to lead them to

17. The manhood suffrage act of 1925 divided Japan into 122 constituencies, each of which returns from three to five members to the lower house, in the proportion of one member to every 120,000 of the population. The changes in the requirements of the election law were as follows: (*The Japan Year Book*, 1929, p. 78.)

Year	Electors		Candidates		Members of House
	Age	Tax	Age	Tax	
1890	25	¥15	30	¥10	300
1900	25	¥10	30	none	381
1920	25	¥ 3	30	none	464
1925	25	none	30	none	466

18. Cf. Iwasaki, cited, p. 77-81.

power. When these expectations were disappointed, the rank and file would often desert *en masse* to a more promising leader. In this situation, party platforms have meant little or nothing; and it was not until after 1926 that the programs of the Seiyukai and Minseito parties began to exhibit any fundamental cleavage.

Neither of the two chief parties represented the Japanese public. They represented certain privileged groups, and their political leaders were no more interested in the welfare of the masses than the bureaucrats. The Seiyukai party is more representative of the landed interests, while the Minseito party is more representative of the industrial interests. But in the course of time both have formed close relations with the old clan cliques and military interests, and both have become affiliated with "big business." The development of a genuine democracy has therefore been as effectively thwarted by a capitalist economy in Japan

as in the United States. The bureaucrats of Japan have built up a modern industrial nation, and turned over the profits to the new capitalist class and its allies, the parties. The two latter have divided the spoils by bargains in the reduction of direct taxation and in the increase of subsidies, and by the gift of directorates in industrial enterprises.

This survey of the evolution of the Japanese political system holds true up to the close of the Taisho era in 1926. Since then important changes have occurred. Two general elections have been held under universal manhood suffrage. Increased power has been placed in the hands of the people, and new proletarian parties have sent representatives to the Diet. The power of the clan bureaucrats has been further reduced, and Cabinet responsibility to the Diet strengthened. These developments have taken place first under a Seiyukai government led by Baron Tanaka, and then under the present Minseito government led by Mr. Hamaguchi.

THE SEIYUKAI GOVERNMENT (April 20, 1927—July 2, 1929)

The circumstances¹⁹ under which the Tanaka Cabinet came into power on April 20, 1927 afford an interesting example of the powerful influence the Privy Council still exerts upon Japanese politics. During March the previous Wakatsuki Cabinet, which was supported by the Kenseikai party,²⁰ had secured passage by the Diet of a measure designed to relieve the financial crisis which was clearly impending. The regular session of the Diet closed on March 26. But conditions in Japanese financial circles were far too serious to be patched up by the measure passed by the Diet. Faced by a growing crisis, the government resorted to an Imperial ordinance authorizing the Bank of Japan to issue emergency loans to distressed banks with the guarantee of Treasury compensation up to 200 million *yen* for losses incurred in handling such loans. On April 13 two draft ordinances embodying this plan were submitted to the Privy Council.²¹ This body seized the opportunity offered to em-

barrass a government to which it was opposed. In a plenary session held April 17, the Privy Council refused its approval of the government proposals. Thereupon, the Wakatsuki Cabinet took the only course left and resigned on April 19. The new government, headed by General Baron Tanaka, came into formal existence the next day.

THE FINANCIAL CRISIS

The underlying cause of the banking panic in the spring of 1927 was the post-war business slump that overtook Japan in 1920. Hundreds of companies failed and many banks were affected, but complete deflation was delayed by large central bank advances to commercial establishments. The official policy hushed up the situation, and looked to time to straighten things out. The disastrous earthquake of 1923 further strained the financial structure by destroying assets upon which bank advances had been secured and for which the insurance companies could not

19. Cf. *Present-Day Japan* (English supplement to the *Osaka Asahi*), 1928, p. 36.

20. Later the Minseito party, cf. p. 157, note 25.

21. The Constitution (Article 8) vests the Emperor with the right to issue Imperial ordinances in place of laws, in

case of urgent necessity to maintain public safety or to avert public calamities. Such ordinances may be issued only when the Diet is not sitting, and cannot be promulgated until the Privy Council has been consulted. They become invalid if not ratified by the next Diet.

assume responsibility without themselves going bankrupt. The breaking point was reached in 1927. Numerous banks failed, the stock market collapsed, prices fell sharply, and for some time general business transactions were practically suspended.

An extraordinary session of the Diet was convened on May 4 by the Tanaka government. The financial measures adopted by this session on May 8 and 9 followed practically the same lines as those put forward by the previous Cabinet. By this time, however, the crisis had become so much more acute that the limit of Treasury compensation had to be raised to a total of 700 million *yen*.²² Nearly forty banks had been forced to close during or after the panic, and the year 1927 was spent wholly in relieving this situation. By May 8, 1928 the special loans granted by the Bank of Japan under government guarantee to the banks in difficulties amounted to 879,500,000 *yen*, including advances made to the Bank of Formosa.²³

A new banking law was made effective in January 1928, under which the government sought the merger of weaker concerns. By July 1928 the number of commercial banks was reduced to 986 from a total of 1,595 just before the panic. The banking readjustment, however, was hindered by a general economic depression that forced the sound banks to hold large funds unemployed.²⁴ Depression in the export trade was intensified by the anti-Japanese boycott in China. The high interest rate in the United States drained the surplus Japanese funds to America, and caused violent fluctuations in the foreign exchange. At one period in the summer of 1928 the value of the *yen*

(par 49.85 cents) fell to 44.75 cents. From this time on the Tanaka Cabinet adopted a temporizing policy, and the fundamental need for deflation and currency contraction, which would have afforded a sound basis for economic recovery, was never met.

PRE-ELECTION POLITICS

When the Tanaka government assumed office in April 1927, more than two years had elapsed since the passage of the manhood suffrage act. Once this suffrage was established, the lower house should have been dissolved at the earliest opportunity to make way for the election of a new national assembly. But the suffrage bill had been passed as a matter of political exigency, not from any sincere desire to make the government responsible to the Japanese public; and the politicians staved off the election as long as possible, fearing its effect on their political fortunes. During this period governments were based upon the unstable support of three minority parties—the Seiyukai, the Kenseikai, and the Seiyuhonto. The Wakatsuki Cabinet had been based chiefly on the Kenseikai, but could count on the tacit support of the other groups if recourse to a general election was threatened. A compromise of this nature had secured passage of the Wakatsuki Cabinet's budget bill early in 1927. When the Cabinet was soon after forced out by the Privy Council, the urgency of the financial situation precluded the delay and uncertainty of an election, and Baron Tanaka was called upon to form his Cabinet.

The Tanaka Cabinet was supported by the Seiyukai party, of which Baron Tanaka was president, with the Kenseikai in opposition. The new Cabinet in turn found its position in the lower house precarious whenever the Seiyuhonto saw fit to join forces with the Kenseikai. This potential threat became actual when these two parties united²⁵ to form the Minseito party on June 1, 1927. Mr. Hamaguchi became leader of the new party, with Mr. Wakatsuki and Mr. Tokonami (Seiyuhonto) as advisers. Although a number of the Seiyuhonto members bolted the coalition to join the Seiyukai, the relative strength in the lower house now be-

22. The bill guaranteed losses the Bank of Japan might undergo by discounting emergency paper for distressed banks. Such discounts, on terms more liberal than those usually granted by the central bank, were allowed for a period of one year, ending May 8, 1928. In effect, it was the same policy of bolstering up the economic structure by loans instead of allowing deflation to take its course.

23. There is evidence that this money was not wholly expended for its professed purpose. The emergency relief legislation was professedly enacted in the interest of the depositors, but in only one case did they get back on the average more than half of their deposits. Yet the total amount for which the closed banks failed was only some 570 million *yen*, compared with 678 million *yen* actually loaned to banks within Japan. Evidently large sums were diverted to institutions that were not affected by the panic and had no reason to demand relief. (Cf. "Bank Relief in Operation," *The Trans-Pacific*, May 26, 1928, p. 6.)

24. The relief money paid to depositors of weak banks was immediately transferred by them to strong banks. But these institutions had more money than they could invest in Japan, owing to the general business depression. The actual effect of the emergency relief legislation was therefore to create the anomaly of an artificially expanded currency in a country that was in the throes of a drastic business depression. A considerable amount of the surplus money that failed to find its way abroad was invested by the bankers in government bonds.

25. For all practical purposes it was a union, although it might be better termed a coalition, since each group retained its own leader and the potentiality of independent action. Cf. p. 162, note 57.

came Seiyukai 190 and Minseito 226. Thus outvoted by a united Opposition party, the Tanaka government began to mend its political fences in preparation for the dissolution and general election that now seemed unavoidable when the Diet should be convened at the end of the year. In Japan, as in the West, certain general preparations are requisite for an election. A war-chest must be collected.²⁶ Candidates must be chosen.²⁷ The government party in Japan holds a particularly strategic position owing to the authority exercised by prefectural governors over the local police in influencing the electorate.²⁸ The Tanaka government followed the customary procedure when it effected a wholesale replacement of the prefectural governors by Seiyukai appointees.

When the Diet assembled for its fifty-fourth session in the latter part of December 1927, it was clear that dissolution was inevitable, and both parties manoeuvred for position. The dissolution, finally effected on January 21, was carried with a high hand. Following two speeches by Premier Tanaka, who also held the portfolio of foreign affairs, and a budgetary statement by the Minister of Finance, the House of Representatives was declared dissolved before the Opposition had a chance to address interpellations to the government. The date of the general election was set for February 20, 1928.

PLATFORMS AND POLICIES

The platforms²⁹ of the two major parties indicated little of the real differences in policy that had now developed between the Seiyukai and the Minseito. These differences were most evident in the spheres of economics and finance, foreign relations, and civil liberties. The economic policies³⁰ of the two parties were conditioned by the business depression that held the country in its grip. The Seiyukai proposed to meet this situation

by having the State finance new enterprises to create a demand for the surplus labor and material. It was a domestic policy—expansive, inflationist, and “positive.” The Minseito, with an eye to the post-war economic readjustment taking place throughout the world, advocated a policy of retrenchment and economy in order to strengthen the *yen* exchange and restore the gold standard. It wished to curtail the budget, where the Seiyukai would increase it. The Minseito policy was therefore economical, deflationist, and “negative.” In its conduct of foreign relations, particularly with regard to China, the Seiyukai under the domination of Baron Tanaka upheld a “positive” policy of armed intervention to protect Japanese nationals and investments. The Minseito, on the other hand, supported a “negative” policy of conciliation and cooperation with the national aspirations of the new Kuomintang régime in China. Finally, the Seiyukai stood for a policy of strict suppression of radicalism, under the all-inclusive term of “dangerous thoughts.” The Minseito advocated a policy that would safeguard personal rights and allow greater freedom of expression to radical ideas.

That the two chief parties should have diverged to this extent was of itself a healthy sign in the growth of representative government in Japan. The differences between them, however, were still conditioned by the minority groups they represented, and did not indicate a cleavage on any basic democratic issue involving the welfare of the Japanese masses. From this angle, the Minseito “liberalism” was of a deceptive character. The policies of the Seiyukai were influenced by the support it drew from the conservative land-owners, who were directly concerned in the development of new railways, roads, and other public enterprises in their local districts. But the policies of the Minseito were dictated by the commercial and industrial interests, who required the gold standard to stabilize the international trade which was their primary concern.³¹ Armed intervention in China resulted in a ruinous economic boycott, and therefore the Minseito preferred a policy of peaceful industrial penetration. And lastly, although

26. The Minseito is supplied with funds chiefly from the Mitsubishi banking interests, the Seiyukai chiefly from the Mitsui; and both draw heavily upon other large commercial enterprises. (Cf. Kenneth Colegrove, “Labor Parties in Japan,” *American Political Science Review*, May 1929, p. 330 and note.)

27. Regular party candidates are autocratically chosen by the party leaders. Numerous independent candidates usually appear, though somewhat checked by the provision that each candidate forfeits a bond of ¥2,000 if he does not poll a certain percentage of the votes of his district.

28. For this reason the government party has rarely been defeated in a general election. It has already been shown that government changes in Japan usually resulted from other causes. Cf. p. 152, note 8.

29. Cf. *The Trans-Pacific*, January 28, 1928, p. 14, for platforms of the eight national parties engaged in the election.

30. Cf. *Present-Day Japan*, cited, p. 166.

31. Since 1924 the total foreign trade of Japan has each year amounted to over four billion *yen*. (Cf. *Economic Statistics of Japan*, Bank of Japan, 1928, p. 112-113.)

the Minseito favored the method of guidance instead of repression, it was as anxious as the Seiyukai to curb the radical movement.

It is in the policies of the new proletarian parties that evidence must be sought for the growth of a genuine liberalism³² in Japanese politics. The platforms³³ of these parties in the election of 1928 also offered little guide to their actual policies, more especially as they feared the heavy hand of the government. In the course of the campaign, however, they demanded super-taxes on the wealthy, socialization of industries, legalizing of strikes, liberalizing of tenant rights, and social insurance laws. The appeal that these policies might have been expected to exert on the new voters was counteracted by a number of factors. The greatest of these was the disunity manifested from the very beginnings of the proletarian movement.

The history of the proletarian parties since 1925, with the advent of manhood suffrage, is marked by a confused succession of splits and reorganizations. Three elements have contributed to their formation—the peasant unions, the labor unions, and a group of intellectuals. The peasants are awake to their position of economic serfdom, but are not broadly class-conscious and are still markedly conservative. The labor unions have no status under the law, and for more than thirty years have struggled for bare existence, while strikes have been severely suppressed by the police. Statistics for 1927 showed only 284,321 organized workers out of a total laboring class of 9,026,536; and these few organized workers were split up among 423 labor unions.³⁴ City and country workers are divided by a conflict of economic interest, since the proletariat, desiring cheap rice, distrusts the farmer who requires a high price for food products. The rock on which the proletarian parties have split mostly, however, is communism. Early efforts to form a united proletarian party in 1925 were nearly successful until the Communist issue was raised. The proletarian parties must always tread warily in regard

to this question, owing to the "peace preservation" law passed in 1925 which forbids the existence of any association designed to "change the fundamental character of the state or to deny the system of private property."³⁵

In general, the proletarian parties represent right, centre, and left factions of the labor and peasant unions. The Social Democratic party (Shakai Minshuto) is a Right-wing organization. This party contains the larger part of the intellectuals, and is the most stable of the proletarian parties, having maintained its organization intact since 1926.³⁶ It is a moderate Socialist party, similar to the Labour party in England, with a school for educational propaganda and a well-thought-out program.³⁷ It stresses trade unions and collective bargaining as the chief weapons of labor. Its evolutionary philosophy of political action³⁸ differentiates it from the Left-wing Labor-Farmer party (Rodo Nominto), which has been accused of harboring Communists and using its published program (not very different from that of the Social Democrats) as a cloak for anti-parliamentary principles and the desire for direct action. On this basis the contest

35. *Ibid.*, p. 341. This statute outlaws the Communist party in Japan.

36. The Shakai Minshuto was first organized in 1901 by some of its present leaders, including Professor I. Abe, but was dissolved by the police the day on which it issued its platform calling for the abolition of armaments, for universal suffrage, and for the nationalization of land and industries.

37. *Labor Parties in Japan*, cited, p. 347-348. Its chief demands include: (1) complete realization of universal suffrage; (2) reform of the House of Peers; (3) removal of restrictions on the freedom of speech, assembly, and association by (a) repeal of the peace preservation law, (b) revision of the peace police law, and (c) revision of the press law; (4) reform of the military administration; (5) popular control of diplomacy; (6) reform of national finance by (a) graduation of the property tax, income tax, and inheritance tax, (b) abolition of the consumption tax on the necessities of life, and (c) extension of banking facilities for the common people; (7) reform of administration by (a) reorganization of local agencies, and (b) improvement in sanitary regulations; (8) reforms in education by (a) revision of the financial support of the public school system, (b) democratization of the universities, and (c) abolition of bureaucratic interference in education; (9) socialization of certain industries; (10) reform of the land system; (11) a program of labor legislation providing for (a) legal recognition of labor unions and of the right to strike, (b) minimum wage law, (c) revision of the factory law, the mining law, and the seaman's law, (d) protective legislation for the building trades, and (e) faithful execution of the treaties of the International Labor Conferences; (12) a farm tenancy law providing for (a) establishment of tenant-farmers' rights, and (b) rationalization of tenant-farmers' rents to landlords; (13) a law for the protection of salaried men; (14) abolishment of legal and economic discrimination against women; and (15) social legislation providing for (a) unemployment, sickness, workmen's compensation for injuries, and old age pensions, (b) improvement in medical and child-birth agencies, and (c) housing.

38. *Ibid.*, p. 347. Set forth in a declaration which reads: "(1) We are convinced that a sound national life can be secured by ushering in political and economic systems which are primarily calculated to advance the interests of the hard-working classes and are determined to do our best to attain this end. (2) We regard the capitalistic methods of production and distribution as deterrent to the development of a sound national life, and are consequently determined to secure their reform by legitimate means. (3) We are opposed both to the existing political parties which represent the interests of the privileged class and to radical parties which disregard the process of social evolution."

32. The veteran statesman, Mr. Y. Ozaki, has long stood almost alone as representative of an advanced liberalism in the Japanese Diet. A recent attempt by Mr. Y. Tsurumi, elected to the Diet in 1928, to form a progressive party has signally failed. Mr. Tsurumi was himself defeated for reelection in 1930.

33. Cf. *The Trans-Pacific*, January 28, 1928, p. 14.

34. Cf. *Labor Parties in Japan*, cited, p. 333. An estimate for 1929 is given below, p. 165, note 84.

within proletarian ranks is waged chiefly between these two parties, which were represented in the elections of both 1928 and 1930. Two other national proletarian parties representing the right and center factions of the labor-farmer organizations were also engaged in the election of 1928. In addition, several local proletarian parties nominated candidates for the Diet.

THE GENERAL ELECTION OF 1928

No startling changes in the political *status quo* were effected on February 20, 1928 by the first election held in Japan under universal manhood suffrage. While the returns showed a considerable gain for the Seiyukai party, the lower house was left almost equally divided between the two major parties. The Tanaka Cabinet interpreted the results in a favorable light, and took on a fresh lease of life. The most significant features were the shrinkage in the number of representatives outside the major parties, and the election of eight proletarian representatives. The results, compared with the previous house, were as follows:

Parties	Members at Dissolution	Members Returned
Seiyukai	190	219
Minseito	219	217
Independents ³⁹	34	14
Reform party	8	4
Business-Men's party	8	4
Social Democrats	0	4
Labor-Farmer	0	2
Japan Labor-Farmer	0	1
Local Proletarian party	0	1
Total ⁴⁰	459	466

These figures show a definite drift toward a two-party system. The two chief parties added twenty representatives to their ranks at the expense of the independents, while the minor parties elected the same number of members. Unfortunately, the stabilizing influence this result might have been expected to exert was nullified by the failure of the Seiyukai to gain an absolute majority, which forced the government to bargain with the other groups for support. This necessity governed the political manoeuvring

that went on among the membership of the lower house for the next two years.⁴¹

The success of the proletarian parties in electing eight representatives to the Diet was approximately equivalent to that achieved by the election of twenty-eight members to the prefectural assemblies the previous autumn. Nevertheless, the proletarian parties elected far fewer representatives to the Diet than their total popular vote (about 500,000) warranted. The root cause of this result was the failure to conclude agreements limiting the number of proletarian candidates.⁴² Analysis of the election returns indicates that if the proletarians had effected agreements in nine districts where their candidates opposed each other, they would have had a good chance to send seventeen members to the Diet instead of eight. Other causes were also operating, such as scarcity of campaign funds, the lack of well-known and experienced candidates, the voters' inertia and fear of radicalism, and the subversive tactics of the Tanaka government. The police indulged in systematic interference with the campaigns of all Opposition candidates, but their hands fell most heavily on the proletarian parties, especially the Labor-Farmer party.⁴³

THE TANAKA REGIME

The most cursory survey of Premier Tanaka's government from 1927 to 1929 brings to light many of the abuses of the worst bureaucratic Cabinets of previous years. Summary suspensions of the Diet to stave off a non-confidence motion,⁴⁴ unwarranted political use of the Emperor's name so flagrant as to call forth a rebuke from the House of Peers,⁴⁵ refusal to resign in face of an almost complete breakdown of the legislative program—all these and many other instances are reminiscent of the days when

41. Cf. *Present-Day Japan*, cited, 1928, p. 37, for the Tanaka government's efforts to secure the support of the Business-Men's party by promising to enact certain laws, and for bribery and coercion of the independents as well as the Minseito members. The fact that Japanese Cabinets have seldom controlled an absolute majority in the lower house has led directly to this political huckstering among the representatives.

42. Cf. *Labor Parties in Japan*, cited, p. 336-337. Japan uses a simple form of proportional representation. Each electoral district sends three, four, or five members, and each voter casts but one vote. Strategy demands that allied parties put forward no more candidates in any one district than stand a good chance of being elected.

43. *Ibid.*, p. 350. In the district where Mr. I. Oyama, leader of the Labor-Farmer party, ran against the Finance Minister in the Seiyukai Cabinet, his headquarters were raided, his canvassers arrested, his political meetings broken up, and his campaign speeches rudely interrupted by the police.

44. Cf. *Present-Day Japan*, cited, 1928, p. 37.

45. *Ibid.*, cf. also *The Trans-Pacific*, February 28, 1929, p. 17.

39. A group that has at times included men of genuine independence and integrity, such as Mr. Y. Ozaki. In general, however, a euphemism for members who relied on personal influence in their local districts to secure election, and then sold their support to the highest bidder among the parties.

40. The discrepancy is accounted for by five vacancies at dissolution, and an increase of two in the statutory membership.

the Elder Statesmen ruled supreme. The arbitrary handling of the dissolution, and the unusually forcible intimidation of the election campaigns of opposing parties have already been noted. It remains to consider the activities of the Tanaka régime in regard to civil liberties, foreign affairs, and legislation.

The proximity of Russia together with the strongly capitalistic nature of the Japanese State have combined to produce a more than ordinary fear of communism in Japan. The Communist party in Japan is an illegal, underground organization. "Control of thought" and "dangerous thoughts" are constantly recurring expressions in Japanese political literature. But it was reserved to the Tanaka government to demonstrate the full possibilities of the peace preservation law⁴⁶ in the suppression of Communist propaganda and "dangerous thoughts." On March 15, 1928 a nation-wide round-up of Communists was carried out by the police, and similar round-ups followed on June 29, 1928 and April 16, 1929, resulting in the arrest of 825 alleged Communists in all.⁴⁷ Throughout this period until late in 1929 the authorities maintained a strict ban on the news of these arrests. This ban was partially lifted on April 10, 1928, when the Minister of Justice published a statement alleging that evidence of a gigantic Communist plot to subvert the national polity had been unearthed. On that date the government dissolved certain alleged subsidiaries of the Japan Communist party, one of which was the Labor-Farmer party.⁴⁸ In June 1928 the Cabinet asked the assent of the Privy Council to an emergency Imperial ordinance increasing the penalties of the peace preservation law from ten years' imprisonment to capital punishment. The Privy Council itself was skeptical over the existence of a state of emergency sufficient to warrant an Imperial ordinance, and pertinently inquired why the Cabinet had failed to introduce this measure at the extraordinary session of the Diet from April 20 to May 7.⁴⁹ More significant still, the wide protest aroused when the Privy Council finally sanctioned the ordinance stimulated

the Minseito to initiate a movement for a constitutional amendment that would take from the Privy Council its advisory powers.⁵⁰ But throughout its tenure of office the Tanaka government continued its campaign against those suspected of harboring dangerous thoughts. Prominent university professors were forced to resign, and student associations devoted to sociological research were disbanded.⁵¹ Special bureaus under the Home Ministry to control communism and under the Education Ministry to curb radical ideas among students were sanctioned by the Diet.⁵² It is necessary to recall conditions in the United States during 1919 and 1920 to envisage similar lengths of police and government suppression of radicalism.

The rise of the new Kuomintang régime to power in China coincided with the years in which the Tanaka government ruled Japan. Premier Tanaka, who was also Minister of Foreign Affairs in the Seiyukai Cabinet, had little patience with the conciliatory policy Foreign Minister Shidehara of the previous Cabinet had adopted toward China.⁵³ Baron Tanaka was incapable of appreciating the force of the nationalistic spirit spreading over China, which Baron Shidehara had correctly gauged, and in both 1927 and 1928 sent armed expeditions to Shantung for the protection of Japanese lives and interests.⁵⁴ The resulting boycott of Japanese goods bore hardest on the Japanese merchants and manufacturers, and roused the Minseito to vigorous opposition. It was chiefly this influential public protest within Japan that led the Tanaka government to a tardy realization that the time for settling China's problems by a policy of armed intervention had passed. The last Japanese troops left Shantung in May 1929.

The Diet session in the spring of 1929, after the Tanaka government had been in power for two years, ended with an almost complete failure of the Seiyukai's legislative program.⁵⁵ Its single real achievement was

50. *Ibid.*, July 7, 1928, p. 16. The Minseito agitation also called for constitutional amendments providing for a six-months' session of the Diet, and for the limitation of the powers of the House of Peers by making a bill passed three times by the lower house a law even without the consent of the Peers.

51. *Ibid.*, April 21, 1928, p. 15.

52. *Ibid.*, May 12, 1928, p. 16; also June 9, 1928, p. 14.

53. During the Nanking Incident of March 24, 1927, the Japanese warships refrained from participating in the protective bombardment laid down by the British and American ships.

54. Cf. "The Nanking Government," F. P. A. *Information Service* report, Vol. V, No. 17, p. 298-300.

55. Cf. editorial, "The End of the Session," *The Trans-Pacific*, April 4, 1929.

46. Cf. p. 159, note 35.

47. Cf. *The Trans-Pacific*, November 14, 1929, p. 18.

48. One of the two Labor-Farmer representatives in the Diet was assassinated, and the other disowned his connection with the party.

49. Cf. *The Trans-Pacific*, June 30, 1928, p. 10.

the passing of the budget,⁵⁶ but the auxiliary bills embodying its "positive" policy were shelved by the Peers.⁵⁷ Of these, the most important was the land tax transfer bill, designed to transfer the collection and proceeds of the land tax from the national to the local governments. A number of other bills, auxiliary to the budget and intended to realize the government's "positive" economic policies, were never approved by the Peers. The small electoral area bill, which was in effect a gerrymander designed to aid the Seiyukai party and to cripple the proletarian parties, was also shelved.⁵⁸

The Tanaka government was suddenly driven from office on July 2, 1929. The weight of its accumulated failures was the ultimate force that caused its fall, but the immediate cause was quite unconnected with its parliamentary position which at the time was stronger than ever. The crisis actually turned upon a rather minor affair, the question of the responsibility for the assassination of Chang Tso-lin in Manchuria in June 1928, and furnishes a fresh illustration of how governmental changes in Japan may still be effected quite apart from accepted parliamentary procedure.⁵⁹ The government's prestige had also been impaired by the long drawn out dispute over the interpretation of the phrase "in the name of their respective peoples" in the Kellogg pact. The Privy Council held that the phrase was a derogation of the Emperor's sovereignty, and its ultimate approval of the pact on June 26, 1929 was not forthcoming until Premier Tanaka agreed to issue an accompanying declaration that the phrase did not apply to Japan.⁶⁰ Count Uchida, who had acted for the Tanaka government with plenipotentiary powers at Paris, thereupon resigned from

the Privy Council, gravely compromising the government.

In the months following the resignation of the Tanaka Cabinet, a long series of scandals gradually came to light, involving the customary attempts of business interests to gain special favors from the government. Highly placed officials, including the Minister of Railways in the Tanaka Cabinet and several members of the Diet, were indicted for accepting bribes from railway, tramway, and other companies.⁶¹ Governor-General Yamanashi of Korea, a Seiyukai appointee, was indicted for accepting a bribe of ¥50,000 from rice merchants in return for the establishment of the Fusan Rice Exchange.⁶² The president of the Board of Decorations was indicted for the sale of honors and decorations during the Tanaka régime, especially at the time of the enthronement ceremonies.⁶³ The Minseito, too, had to face revelations of acts committed by certain high members of their party during previous administrations.⁶⁴

The sensation was at its height when Baron Tanaka succumbed to a sudden heart attack on September 29, 1929. His own incorruptibility had never been impugned, and he died a poor man. His death marked the passing of the last prominent political representative of the Choshu military clique, whose extra-constitutional authority has been one of the chief obstacles to the development of a responsible parliamentary democracy in Japan.

PROLETARIANS IN THE DIET⁶⁵

The proletarian parties assumed the right of controlling their representatives elected to the Diet in 1928, and issued instructions to them through the central executive committees of the several parties calling for

56. The budget as passed for the fiscal year 1929 totalled ¥1,773,567,040—one of the largest budgets in recent years.

57. The government had gained a safe majority for its measures in the lower house by devious trades, aided also by the withdrawal of Mr. Tokonami and his (Seiyuhontō) followers from the Minseito. Mr. Tokonami struck hands with Premier Tanaka too late; and his opportunist policy has weakened the prestige of this last powerful political leader of the Satsuma clan.

58. Cf. *The Japan Weekly Chronicle*, April 4, 1929, p. 398-399.

59. Cf. editorial, "Baron Tanaka's Dilemma," *The Trans-Pacific*, July 11, 1929. The Diet had exacted Premier Tanaka's pledge to issue a statement regarding the results of the investigation into the death of Chang Tso-lin. It became known that the promised statement held certain Japanese officers responsible for failing to take due precautions for the safety of Chang Tso-lin's train when it passed under the South Manchuria railway bridge near Mukden. Premier Tanaka therefore became responsible to the Emperor for the punishment of these officers, which, however, would have been followed by the resignation of his Minister of War. No other army officer would have assumed the portfolio under such circumstances. Seeing no escape from the dilemma, Premier Tanaka resigned.

60. Cf. *ibid.*, July 4, 1929, p. 11.

61. Mr. Ogawa, the Minister of Railways, was accused of accepting bribes for arranging the government purchase or assistance of a number of railways during the Tanaka régime. (Cf. *The Japan Weekly Chronicle*, April 24, 1930, p. 424-26.)

62. *Ibid.*, May 1, 1930, p. 451.

63. *Ibid.*, May 8, 1930, p. 487-88. From May 27, 1927 to July 10, 1929 the Board of Decorations issued orders, medals, etc. to more than 20,000 people.

64. Cf. *The Trans-Pacific*, March 13, 1930, p. 15; also *The Japan Weekly Chronicle*, April 24, 1930, p. 424-25. Mr. Kobashi, the Minister of Education in the new Minseito Cabinet, was forced to resign when it was revealed that he was involved in a railway scandal connected with a former government.

65. Cf. *Labor Parties in Japan*, cited, p. 352-358; also editorial, "Proletarian Politics in Japan," *The Trans-Pacific*, March 7, 1929. The proletarian parties continued to win successes in local elections throughout Japan. In June 1929 there were about 400 proletarian members of town and village assemblies out of a total number of 11,600 members. (Cf. editorial, "Proletarian Progress," *The Trans-Pacific*, June 6, 1929.)

the formation of a united proletarian bloc in the Diet. The actions of the proletarian representatives in the Diet during the Tanaka régime considerably enhanced their prestige. Much as Itagaki and Okuma had done in an earlier day, they treated the House of Representatives as a forum of public opinion, calling the nation's attention to the abuses of the government, the suppression of free speech, the injustice to the

workingmen by the failure to legalize labor unions and the collective bargain, the disgrace of ignoring the international labor treaties, and the wrongs suffered by tenant-farmers who lacked adequate tenant rights. These speeches produced an added effect since they were widely reported by the leading units of the vernacular press, which were practically united in support of the proletarian contentions.

THE MINSEITO GOVERNMENT (July 2, 1929—

The Minseito Cabinet formed by Mr. Hamaguchi on July 2, 1929 immediately issued a comprehensive statement of its foreign and domestic policies.⁶⁶ The most important called for improvement of Sino-Japanese relations, reduction of armaments through international agreement, curtailment of the budget, readjustment of the national debt, and lifting of the gold embargo. The Minseito party was in a minority in the lower house, but could look forward to six months' clear sailing before the assembly of the Diet in December. This period was largely devoted to the realization of the Minseito's financial program, especially with reference to raising the gold embargo.

LIFTING THE GOLD BAN

The problem of lifting the gold ban had engaged the attention of Japanese financial leaders ever since 1920. It had been delayed owing to the failure to achieve the primary requisite—genuine deflation. To this end the Minseito Cabinet inaugurated its campaign for State and private economy. The program called for curtailment of government expenditure, readjustment of the national debt, and retrenchment in private business and consumption. The Ministry of Finance at once set about a thorough-going revision of the previous Seiyukai budget, through the formation of a working budget for the remainder of the fiscal year 1929, ending March 31, 1930. The working budget for this eight-months' period, announced by the Ministry on July 29, effected a total cut of ¥92,506,108 in the Seiyukai figures. The proposed Minseito budget for the fiscal year 1930 called for an additional saving of ¥78,389,447, which was slightly

reduced by the actual working budget made effective when the Diet was dissolved.⁶⁷ This budget was balanced without the issue of new loans;⁶⁸ it also increased the sinking fund for the national debt by the addition of the German reparation of ¥6,300,000. The same principles of retrenchment were enforced upon the prefectural and local governments. Private business concerns were also conservative, and the people as a whole responded well to the appeal for economy.⁶⁹

These efforts of the government were accompanied by an improvement in certain basic economic conditions during the last six months of 1929 that finally made the restoration of the gold standard possible. The excess of imports in Japan's international trade for 1929 (including Taiwan and Chosen) amounted to only ¥170,969,000—the lowest adverse trade balance in ten years.⁷⁰ The recovery of the *yen* was equally striking. Standing at 437/8 cents when the Tanaka Cabinet fell, it rose steadily to 49 cents in December, and early in January to 49 1/4 cents, which is approximately the point above which it becomes more unprofitable to ship gold than to buy exchange. The wholesale price level during 1929 also fell rapidly, from 181.2 in January to 163 in December,

67. Cf. *The Japan Weekly Chronicle*, January 2, 1930, p. 8; also *The Osaka Mainichi* (English edition), March 27, 1930, p. 1. The figures are as follows:

Previous Seiyukai budget (1929)	¥1,773,567,040
Minseito working budget (1929)	¥1,681,060,932
Proposed Minseito budget (1930)	¥1,602,671,485
Actual working budget (1930)	¥1,606,716,000

68. This "no-loan budget" has evoked the criticism within Japan that it protects the bankers by keeping up the price of government bonds, in which they have heavily invested their surplus funds. It is argued that in this way the budget makes good the value of the idle money created by the relief legislation, and may therefore act as an agency of inflation unless correlated with a policy of currency contraction by the Bank of Japan. (Cf. *The Trans-Pacific*, November 21, 1929, p. 6.)

69. The Cabinet over-reached itself, however, by attempting to enforce a ten per cent salary cut upon the already none-too-well-paid government employees and officials. Vigorous public protest eventually forced the government to abandon this effort at economy. (Cf. editorial "The Lesson of the Government's Defeat," *ibid.*, October 31, 1929.)

70. The invisible items must have largely offset this amount, since in 1928 the excess of invisible exports was estimated at ¥170,376,000.

66. Cf. *The Trans-Pacific*, July 18, 1929, p. 15, for text.

showing that a genuine process of deflation was taking place.⁷¹ The untoward effects of this process were also in evidence, in the form of intensified business depression, with an increasing number of unemployed.⁷²

The single remaining obstacle to the lifting of the gold ban was the low rate of interest prevailing in Japan contrasted with that in financial centres abroad. The New York stock market crash in the fall of 1929 partially equalized the interest rates at home and abroad, and on November 21 Finance Minister Inouye announced that the gold ban would be lifted January 11, 1930. The removal was smoothly accomplished on the date set, with *yen* exchange at 49¼ cents. On January 17, 1930 the total demand liabilities of the Bank of Japan were 1,776 million *yen*, covered by gold reserves amounting to 1,088 million *yen*—a ratio of 61.2 per cent, considerably higher than that of the central bank of any other country save the United States.⁷³ Moreover, the government through the Bank of Japan had an additional 304 million *yen* deposited abroad, and had arranged for New York and London credits totalling another 100 million *yen*.

It is still too early to judge of the effect of the restoration of the gold standard. The *yen* exchange has risen to 49½ cents; and the price index in Japan continues to decline. Business depression and unemployment, however, are on the increase. The chief danger is the low rate of interest still prevailing in Japan, which has induced Japanese bankers and other private concerns to pay off loans contracted abroad at a higher rate of interest. Operations of this nature were reported to have reduced the gold reserve held abroad by ¥176,000,000 during the first quarter of 1930.⁷⁴

THE GENERAL ELECTION OF 1930

On January 21, 1930, after the customary holiday recess, the Diet was reopened with addresses by the Premier, the Foreign Min-

ister, and the Finance Minister.⁷⁵ Following interpellations by Mr. Inukai, the new president of the Seiyukai party, which were answered by Premier Hamaguchi, the order for the dissolution of the lower house was brought forward. The date of the general election was set for February 20, 1930.

The Minseito government occupied a strong position as it entered upon the election struggle. Its policy of financial retrenchment and the successful lifting of the gold ban had earned it a very general popularity. Popular disapproval of the previous Seiyukai government had been deepened by the revelation of the scandals attending the Tanaka régime. The great advantage held by the government in conducting the election was fully utilized by its Home Minister, Mr. Adachi.⁷⁶ As usual, the platforms of the two major parties were too vague and general to furnish any indication of the real points at issue.⁷⁷ The Minseito waged its campaign chiefly on the basis of its financial policies, and pressed home the scandals of the Seiyukai régime. The untoward effects of the Seiyukai intervention in China were contrasted with the conciliatory policy of Baron Shidehara. The Seiyukai party attacked the evils of business depression and unemployment, which it laid to the Minseito's economy program.

The proletarians were again represented by four national parties.⁷⁸ The Social Democrats (Shakai Minshuto) were led as usual by Professor Abe, who had been their chief parliamentary representative. The radical Labor-Farmer party (Ronoto) had been permitted to reorganize by the Minseito government, and was again in the field.⁷⁹ A consolidation of nearly all the centre groups in the proletarian movement was represented in the election by the Japan Mass party (Nihon Taishuto).⁸⁰ In spite of the obvious les-

71. Cf. *Index Number of Average Monthly Wholesale Prices in Tokyo* (issued by The Bank of Japan), December 1929.

72. Cf. editorial, "Depression and Unemployment," *The Trans-Pacific*, February 20, 1930.

73. Gold coverage for Bank of Japan notes on this date was 87.8 per cent, the highest in the world.

74. Cf. *The Trans-Pacific*, February 13, 1930, p. 5. The low interest rate in Japan is a result of the relief legislation of 1927, which stocked the banks with large sums of money which the business structure of the country was unable to absorb. Much of this money was invested by the banks in government bonds, which the bankers are anxious to sell before the interest rate rises and the price of the bonds falls. Finance Minister Inouye has been criticized for failing to have the Bank of Japan raise the interest rate, thus benefiting the bankers.

Raising the interest rate would prevent the efflux of gold, but it would also intensify the business depression. The fact that the bankers are taking advantage of the difference in interest rates may of itself threaten the gold standard to such an extent that a contraction of the currency leading to a higher rate of interest will become unavoidable.

75. Cf. *The Japan Weekly Chronicle*, January 30, 1930, p. 92-97 for text of addresses and report of the interpellations.

76. *Ibid.*, February 27, 1930, p. 186. The Minseito government made a drastic sweep of the Seiyukai prefectural governors and chiefs of police, replacing them with Minseito henchmen.

77. Cf. *The Osaka Mainichi* (English edition), January 31, 1930, p. 1, for the Minseito and Seiyukai platforms.

78. Cf. *The Osaka Mainichi*, January 30, 1930, p. 1, for platforms; also *The Japan Weekly Chronicle*, February 27, 1930, p. 199, for labor manifestos.

79. Cf. *The Trans-Pacific*, November 7, 1929, p. 16; also editorial, "Rival of Left Wing," November 14, 1929. The party was reconstituted November 1, 1929.

sons of the 1928 election, these parties were unable to cooperate to the extent of eliminating all candidates save those that stood a good chance of election, and rival proletarian candidates again opposed each other in many of the election districts.

The election, held February 20, 1930, was a complete government triumph. The Minseito party won a total of 273 seats, the Seiyukai 174, the proletarian parties 5, and other groups 14. Premier Hamaguchi's government, which controlled only 176 seats in the previous Diet, was now assured of a clear majority of 80 seats over all other parties combined. The significance of this absolute majority upon parliamentary progress in Japan can hardly be overestimated.⁸¹ For one thing, it enables the Minseito government to carry out the policies it has formulated. The Seiyukai party is now faced with the healthy parliamentary necessity of every Opposition—that of developing a sounder and more constructive program than the government party. Again, the further reduction in the number of representatives outside the two chief parties has resulted in the establishment of a definitely two-party parliamentary system. The Minseito's absolute majority obviates the need for huckstering and jobbery among the independent representatives that so disfigured the Tanaka government and many others before it. Moreover, the responsibility of Premier Hamaguchi to his majority party in the lower house has been solidly established, and it becomes increasingly necessary for the Cabinet to be constituted from this majority party. The bureaucratic advisers of the Emperor, who are still in evidence, are more and more prevented from interfering with the working of the parliamentary government that has evolved in Japan. Finally, it is noteworthy that 80 per cent of the voters exercised the franchise in this election of 1930.

The proletarian debacle was in some ways the most striking feature of the election, resulting in the return of but five parliamentary representatives instead of eight as in 1928. The Social Democrats elected only two representatives, and Professor Abe him-

self lost his seat. The radical Labor-Farmer party elected its president, Mr. Oyama; and the new Japan Mass party elected two representatives. The proletarians polled over 500,000 votes, by far the largest popular vote of any of the minor parties, which illustrates the loss caused by setting up rival candidates.⁸² Immediately after the election a movement was started toward a union of the proletarian parties, and it remains to be seen whether the divisive influences at present separating them can be bridged.⁸³ In the final analysis, the basic handicap of the proletarian movement is the weakness and disunity of the labor unions.⁸⁴

ELECTION REFORM

The Tokyo *Asahi* estimated that the general election of 1930 cost the Minseito at least ¥6,000,000 and the Seiyukai ¥4,000,000, making a total of ¥10,000,000.⁸⁵ The largest proportion of this sum was spent on printing, but part of it at least went to the bribing of electors. Every general election in Japan is followed by a long list of prosecutions for bribery and other illegal practices.⁸⁶ Political corruption is not limited to any one country, but in Japan where State and business are so closely intertwined it is particularly rife and peculiarly difficult to handle. The election law limiting the amount to be expended by candidates is practically a dead letter. The legal limit⁸⁷ varies between ¥12,000 and ¥15,000. On an average the election expenses for the successful candidate actually amount to ¥50,000; and in many cases they run up well over ¥100,000.

The Minseito government has organized a Commission on the Reform of Elections, which is to make recommendations to the

82. Polling 5 per cent of the total popular vote, the proletarians were entitled to 23 parliamentary seats. The vote was distributed as follows:

Parties	Popular Vote	Elected	Ratio to Popular Vote
Minseito	5,477,650	273	245
Seiyukai	3,928,294	174	176
Proletarians	523,388	5	23
Independents	322,875	5	14
National People's party	128,496	6	6
Reform party	55,487	3	2
TOTAL	10,436,690	466	466

83. *The Japan Weekly Chronicle*, April 10, 1930, p. 370.

84. Cf. editorial, "Labor Unions and the Proletarian Movement," *The Trans-Pacific*, January 9, 1930. In June 1929 only 321,125 out of 4,831,000 factory operatives were members of unions, and this small number was divided among 542 unions.

85. Cf. *The Japan Weekly Chronicle*, February 27, 1930, p. 191.

86. Cf. *ibid.*, p. 195, 199, for list of prosecutions following the recent election.

87. The expenses should not exceed an amount equal to forty sen per voter for the average number of qualified voters in a district. (Cf. *Labor Parties in Japan*, cited, p. 333, note 9.)

80. *Ibid.*, December 29, 1928, p. 17; also *Labor Parties in Japan*, cited, p. 361. This party was formally inaugurated December 20, 1928.

81. Cf. William M. McGovern, "The General Election in Japan," *Foreign Notes* (Chicago Council on Foreign Relations), March 8, 1930.

government after due investigation. The first meeting of the commission was held on April 12, 1930, when it was decided that study would centre chiefly on devising measures to end the purchase of votes, to restrict campaign expenditures, and to eliminate official interference in elections. Three reforms have been advocated as a cure for these evils. First, the candidate who can be proved before a judge to have given bribes should *ipso facto* forfeit his seat. Secondly, the unavoidable expenses of an election, including public meetings and the circulation of election addresses, should be paid by the State; and all other expenses should be strictly limited and publicly audited. Thirdly, local officials who supervise the elections should be made free from interference by the central government.⁸⁸

THE MINSEITO'S FIRST YEAR

The results achieved by the Minseito government in its financial program and in the parliamentary election have already been considered. It has also made a significant change in its dealings with radicalism and radical movements. The acceptance of the reconstituted Labor-Farmer party is one instance of this changed attitude that has been mentioned. The new Ministry of Education also has a different conception of the function it should perform in the matter of

"thought control" among the students. The Ministry proposes to maintain closer relations with various social and intellectual organizations, and to launch an educational campaign in Japanese history and thought and in Marxism and Leninism by means of lectures and pamphlets. Mr. K. Nomura, Vice-Minister of Education, is quoted as saying: "We propose to let students freely study radical principles and at the same time encourage the study of national thought tendencies so that they may criticize the two streams of thought from a neutral point of view."⁸⁹ The ban against communism, however, is as stringent as ever, and Home Minister Adachi took advantage of the opportunity presented by the publication of the news of the Communist arrests to warn the people in general against radical movements. At that time (November 1929) the judicial authorities reported that nearly all leading Communists in the country had been arrested in the preceding eighteen months.

The Minseito government has also been faced with significant issues in its foreign relations.⁹⁰ In this sphere it has signed a tariff agreement with China, which is to be incorporated in a full commercial treaty now under negotiation. At London it has also successfully cooperated with Great Britain and the United States in arranging the tripartite agreement for naval limitation.

CONCLUSION

The general outlines of the political development that has occurred in Japan are clear. At the beginning of this century the Elder Statesmen controlled the government, and through the government the parties and the people. The change already consummated has placed the parties in virtual control of the government. Certain obstacles must still be surmounted before this process is complete. The advisory powers exercised by the Privy Council must be curtailed, the veto power exerted by the House of Peers over legislation must be limited, the portfolios of War and Navy must be made available to civilians, and the three months' session of the Diet must be extended at least to six months. These changes are inevitable and indeed are already in process, as was

demonstrated by the constitutional amendments proposed in 1928 by the Minseito party.⁹¹ The third cycle in Japan's political development—democratic control of the parties and the government—was inaugurated by the passage of the manhood suffrage act in 1925. The Japanese people as a whole are still unawakened to their responsibilities in a democracy, but universal manhood suffrage is fertile pasturage for the growth of a spirit of democratic government. The relation of the proletarian movement to the future course of political developments in Japan touches upon fundamentals. The significant political struggles of the future in Japan, as in the West, will turn upon the question of the democratic control of its economic structure.

88. Cf. editorial, "Corruption and Politics in Japan," *The Trans-Pacific*, December 26, 1929; also "Political Scandals in Japan," December 12, 1929, p. 6. Cf. also *The Japan Weekly Chronicle*, April 24, 1930, p. 418.

89. Cf. *The Trans-Pacific*, September 12, 1929, p. 11.

90. Cf. *ibid.*, January 30, 1930, p. 11-12, for speech by Baron Shidehara outlining the problems of Japanese foreign policy.

91. Cf. p. 161, note 50.